

The long-awaited United States Air Force Memorial was officially dedicated on Saturday afternoon and then opened to the public the week of October 15.Â The weekend ceremonies included a performance by the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds precision flying team and a concert by country star Lee Ann Womack.

CeremoniesÂ took place at the memorial site overlooking Arlington National Cemetery from the south (just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.).

The Air Force Memorial was designed by the late James Ingo Freed, who also designed the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.Â It evokes flight and the flying spirit through the use of three stainless steel spires that depict the Thunderbirds' trademark "bomb-burst" flying formation.Â The three spires also represent the three core values of the Air Force: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all that is done. The Air Force is the last military service branch to have its own memorial.Â First conceived in 1992, the memorial serves as a place of reverence and remembrance.Â It will forever honor the service and sacrifice of those patriotic Americans, living and dead, active, guard, reserve and retired, who have helped our country soar confidently into the wild blue yonder. The memorial is a gift to the nation from the Air Force Memorial Foundation, which will work together with the National Park Service to maintain the site.Â The memorial was made possible by donations from more than 140,000 people.

To honor an Air Force service member, go to the following site:

<http://www.airforcememorial.org/heroes/leavetribute.asp>

For more information about the dedication ceremonies, go the following site:

<http://www.airforcememorial.org/dedication/index.asp#1>